Prayer Questions

Is it proper for a member of the church to participate in a prayer led by a non-member? If I pray along with that non-member, does my “Amen” validate that prayer led by that non-member before God?

God does not hear the prayers of alien sinners (Is. 59:2), save for those who are searching for the truth with honest hearts (Matt. 5:6; Acts 10:1-4; 11:13-14; Luke 8:15). “Amen” (“so be it”) by definition shows verbal approval, so does God want us showing approval of error? (Eph. 5:11; 2 John 9-11)

That said, many factors make each individual case in which this situation occurs a matter of personal judgment:

- In some cases we know the hearts of an individual (Mark 7:20-23), yet in others we don’t (1 Tim. 5:24). Can we in every case know if the non-Christian who’s leading the prayer is closed-minded to the gospel, or like Cornelius whose prayers outside of Christ were heard because he obviously was open to the truth?
- If we bow our head during a public prayer led by someone not a member of the church, are we giving them and our brethren the impression that we endorse their prayer and thus consider them to be in Christ even though they’re denomination? Would that be a stumbling block to weaker brethren, leading them to become more ecumenical? (Rom. 14:21)
- Children are not members of the church, yet they are not sinners either if they’ve not yet become accountable. We are to train them how to pray (Eph. 6:4), allowing them to pray verbally themselves as a teaching tool. We would hinder our efforts to teach them if they noticed we openly weren’t praying alongside them.

One would be wise to consider each of these and other elements and whether they truly play a factor in each individual situation, and then make a personal judgment accordingly and individually, keeping it between you and God (Rom. 14:22). If you have any doubts whatsoever, then abstain because whatever violates your conscience is sin (Rom. 14:23).
Saying “Amen” itself doesn’t validate a prayer before God. Rather, whether the prayer is in complete accordance with his will does that (Col. 3:17).

If what is being prayed by the non-Christian is completely scriptural, and if you’ve taken into account the previously-discussed factors and made the personal, private judgment that it’s okay to make it your own prayer to God...then your prayer would be valid before God, not because of the “Amen” per se, but because what was prayed is scriptural and you made it your own prayer.